

REMARKS

The present invention relates to a thermally expandable microcapsule that can be thermally expanded at low temperatures and which provides an expanded microcapsule that is resistant to shrinkage at high temperatures.

In the Office Action of July 12, 2007, it is first of all appreciated by the Applicant that the Examiner (in Paragraphs 2-4) withdrew several rejections that had been earlier made. However, claim 1 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) based on EP 1230975A1 (Masuda), with Examples 3 and 4 being specifically cited.

In this Amendment, claim 1, with respect to the acrylonitrile component in the nitrile-based monomer component, the lower limit thereof has been amended to 64% by weight. This amendment of claim 1 is supported, e.g., by working Examples 3, 5, 6, and 7 (see Table 1 at page 10 of the specification).

In view thereof, and for the reasons discussed below, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 1 meets all statutory requirements and is now in condition for allowance.

Novelty of claim 1

Examples 3 and 4 of Masuda disclose that an oil phase was prepared by mixing 150g of acrylonitrile, 100g of methacrylonitrile, 10g of methylmethacrylate.... The shell polymer of these prior art Examples contained a nitrile-based monomer component in an amount 96.2% by weight, and the content of acrylonitrile component in the nitrile-based monomer component was

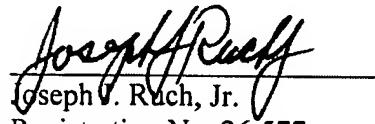
60% by weight. These prior art thermally expandable microcapsules do not, therefore, satisfy the requirements of present claim 1. Accordingly, the rejection of under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Masuda has clearly been overcome and should now be withdrawn.

In view of the above, reconsideration and allowance of this application are now believed to be in order, and such actions are hereby earnestly solicited.

If any points remain in issue which the Examiner feels may be best resolved through a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is kindly requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

The USPTO is directed and authorized to charge all required fees, except for the Issue Fee and the Publication Fee, to Deposit Account No. 19-4880. Please also credit any overpayments to said Deposit Account.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Joseph V. Ruch, Jr.  
Registration No. 26,577

SUGHRUE MION, PLLC  
Telephone: (202) 293-7060  
Facsimile: (202) 293-7860

WASHINGTON OFFICE  
**23373**  
CUSTOMER NUMBER

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